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‘I Got it From My Mama’: Second-Generation Immigrants at Fordham University and their Relationship with the English Language and “the American Identity”

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Abstract

The topic of this thesis is the relationship between language, “the American identity,” and self-esteem among second-generation immigrants at Fordham University. The scholarly discourse involves extensive research of bilinguals, linguistics, immigration statistics, socioeconomic statuses, and identity of second-generation immigrants. The very foundation of our language acquisition is developed before individuals are able to speak. The critical periods of children learning languages can affect their language proficiency for the rest of their lives. Furthermore, scholars connect communication and identity because each person is able to illustrate who they are through dialogue and conversation. I will be able to connect language proficiency and socioeconomic factors by analyzing twenty-one surveys and six interviews taken by Fordham Students. Their answers will reflect their past experiences with peers and authorities in regards to their confidence or perception of their intellect and communication abilities. I assert that the majority of second-generation immigrants at Fordham University have higher self-esteems due to interventions such as their parents’ educational successes, attending private schools, and continuous parental involvement in their studies. In comparison, the minority of second-generation immigrants who do not have the resources to overcome their obstacles often had lower self-esteems while speaking or writing in English. In addition, despite whether their English proficiency is accomplished or feeble, second-generation immigrants do not base their identity solely on speaking the language. English may be a factor to an American identity, but cultural ideals and mentalities etc are factors as well.

Introduction

In this essay I explore the relationship between language proficiency and “the American Identity” of second-generation immigrants at Fordham University. In the first section, children’s language development, bilinguals, and my methodologies are the foundation of my paper. The importance of cognitive development during the critical stages of children’s lives is stressed. Then, I define bilinguals in terms that I will use throughout the paper. The following section includes a description of my methodologies, but I focus more on the surveys distributed to Fordham University students. The next section I present is the relationship between human, social, and financial capital and second-generation immigrants’ low-self esteem. In contrast, the next section focuses on the high self-esteem of second-generation immigrants and their relationship with abundant human, social, and financial capital. In each section depicting self-esteem, three of the six interviews are dissected. Next, comparisons of the different students and their self-esteems are analyzed. The section following the compare and contrast of self-esteems focuses on the relationship between the self-identification of being an American or having “the American identity” and English language. The last two sections are reflective of my experiences being a Polish-American and the challenges faced while researching this topic.

Children’s Language Development, Bilinguals, and Methodology

Developing the acquisition of English is known to be difficult due to its complexities of grammar, sentence structure, word usage, and content put forth by the

speaker. Mastering English has been proven difficult for not only immigrants, second-generation immigrants, but native-born citizens as well. Regardless what country a person originated from, language development takes place “before the child utters his first words” (Millar, 83). This means that children’s ability to speak and communicate was implemented years before education could reverse any bad habits. Researchers, such as Donald J. Hernandez and Katherine Darke, emphasize the importance of children’s language advancement. They assert that “early childhood years are critical for children’s cognitive and social development. It is during these years that the children develop and expand the ability to communicate effectively” (349). Moreover, they argue that the parents’ influence, especially for immigrants and their children, can extremely impact their educational success due to various factors. They attest that parental educational attainments are important “because they influence parental occupations and income as well as current parental values in socializing, but also because they influence the levels of education and income that children achieve when they [...] become adults” (24). Low parental educational attainments put children at risk for doing poorly at school. Of these children, the ones who have the highest risk may not speak English well, and/or have parents who do not speak English well (42). It is crucial to my argument to look at the influence parents’ have over their children because childhood learning experiences are the foundation of their educational success for most of their lives.

As children grow older, language becomes a “socioculturally situated social practice” (Kaplan, Norton, & Toohey, 119). In other words, language is “made and

remade in conversations.” This means that individuals come to know themselves through those conversations (119). Subsequently, each individual holds immense value to language as well as its content, clarity, sentence structure, and grammar. In this way, language is a description of the individual. When one speaks, the speaker expects and desires to be understood, believed, obeyed, respected, and distinguished (119). It follows that if one makes frequent mistakes while communicating thoughts and ideas through speaking and writing, he or she will develop an uncertainty and hesitancy while speaking to peers, authorities, and/or adults due to the lack of ability to embody who they are in conversation. Moreover, it is fitting to assume that if immigrant parents implement incorrect habits of speech; their children will develop these habits to a certain degree. These children who face these daily obstacles will be more self-conscious while they speak or articulate ideas more often than the average English-speaking person. Lastly, the children of immigrants who do not exhibit any problems, nor feel self-conscious were able to reconcile common difficulties faced by both immigrants and their children. This occurred by living with family members who acquired high-achieving parental educational attainments, profuse incomes, and other environmental influences such as schools they had attended, extracurricular activities, and parents’ involvement in school.

Bilinguals

In order to understand the type of second-generation immigrants I surveyed and interviewed, the term “bilingual” must be clearly defined. It refers to individuals who have been influenced in any way by a language other than English. One does not have to

have complete fluency in reading, writing, or speaking for two or more languages to be considered bilingual. For example, an individual who cannot speak a second language but knows a few phrases or words is considered a “nonfluent bilingual.” Nonfluent bilinguals are “second-language users who possesses sufficient skill with a language for successful basic communication” but does not possess “native-like control” (Segalowitz and Gatbonton, 77). On the contrary, an individual who has no difficulties speaking, reading, and/or writing their second-language is considered a “fluent bilingual.” Norman Segalowitz and Elizabeth Gatbonton have found that fluency “may be described as ranging from minimal to almost native-like” (78). Generally, nonfluent second-language users are the typical representation of bilinguals (77). The participants in my study ranged from nonfluent to fluent bilinguals with native-like speech. Ten participants were very fluent in one or more languages, seven participants were able to minimally speak, read, and/or write one or more languages, and four did not speak, read, or write any other languages besides English. There were no findings that suggested whether or not nonfluent bilinguals had more or less difficulties than the fluent second-generation immigrants.

In this paper, I assert that the majority of fluent and nonfluent bilingual, second-generation immigrants at Fordham University were able to bypass obstacles with English proficiency unscathed due to their parents’ choices of their own educational institutions, placement into private schooling throughout adolescence and teenage years, as well as playing a major role in their child’s education and other extramural activities. I, further, argue that in contrast to the second-generation immigrants who bypassed English-related

obstacles, immigrant parents who do not attain high-levels of educational achievement, put their child into special schooling, or partake in other beneficial activities will adversely affect the accuracy of speaking, and writing; this can, in turn, lower their self-esteem compared to their counterparts. Furthermore, acquiring English does not automatically factor as the most important quality of an American Identity. Identity is fluid and holds an innumerable amount of characteristics.

Methodology

In order to articulate these arguments, my methodologies explored several different areas of research. First, I studied scholarly discourse on linguistics. The importance of language acquisition, its complexities, and bilinguals' relationships with their second-language are futile to understand the underlying factors of second-generation immigrants' development. Furthermore, much of this research focuses on children because their success or failures during the critical periods of cognitive and social development occur at early stages of their lives.

Next, by focusing on these notions, I compiled a questionnaire in attempt to extract Fordham students' experiences as second-generation immigrants. About seventeen questions were devoted to the educational experiences of their parents. Here, they were encouraged to give detailed explanations whether or not their parents had experienced any difficulties while speaking. These difficulties include but are not limited to grammar, sentence structure, vocabulary, or expressing ideas. Furthermore, they were forced to objectively rate their parents' English from 1 (has great difficulty speaking) to 5

(Excellent English, no difficulties). The next sixteen questions focused on the surveyors experiences. They assessed whether they had difficulties reading, writing, speaking, such as expressing their opinions, confusing tenses or the order of sentence structures, and participating in class. If the participants stated that they have difficulties in these areas, it was recommended that they articulate examples of whether they were ever teased, and if they felt embarrassed as a result. Both sets of questions were necessary to evaluate a correlation between immigrant parents and their children as the crux of my arguments. The last set of questions focused on how they identify themselves as part of their immigrant culture or as Americans. Lastly, I interviewed six second-generation immigrants at Fordham University in order to grasp a more detailed picture of their experiences. I talked with Emma, a Russian-American, Gabriela, an Italian-American, Keith, a Chinese-American, Nathan, an Argentinean-American, Travis, a Korean-American, and Sam, a Japanese-American. Each interview took approximately thirty minutes to an hour which consisted of answering surveys and asking follow-up questions. As a result, I found that there are two categories that second-generation immigrants at Fordham are classified in. Both of these groups are determined by different socioeconomic statuses and parental achievement.

Human, Social, and Financial Capital and Low Self-Esteems

The first group consists of factors that lumps four participants into this category. According to their surveys, at least one parent lacks collegiate education, had self-taught themselves English, and had some difficulty speaking English. In addition, these

immigrant parents frequently or sometimes confused tenses, verbs, and sentence structures. Two second-generation immigrants were fluent and the two were nonfluent. According to Hernandez and Darke, family characteristics such as economic well-being and parental education influence their children's abilities for success (350). They named three types of capital that dictate the success of children of immigrants: Human, Social, and Financial Capitals. Human capital is measured by parents' educational background. From a psychological perspective, parents' educations are essential ingredients for their children because as a child, "critical development occurs in [...] cognitive and other important competency areas" (Barlow & Durand, 501). For the first four or five years of their lives, immigrant parents influence a large portion of their children's language acquisition and other cognitive processes. This is problematic if parents do not speak English well because children "develop one skill before acquiring the next" (502). For example, if a house's foundation was built on concrete with several cracks, problems in the house will continue in the future, such as flooding which will promote the growth of mold cultures. These problems are not solved until the homeowner intervenes and fixes the cracked foundation. Similar to this house analogy, children who learn language incorrectly will continue to have problems speaking correctly as adolescents, teenagers, and adults unless interventions occur. These interventions may include private schooling, tutoring, or special classes with purposes of correcting second-generation immigrants' English.

Financial capital is "influences of the environment" such as types of schools they attend, and materials they can buy (Hernandez, 349). The more income immigrant

families have the more goods they can buy to alleviate some or any difficulties their children possess with language proficiency. Furthermore, immigrant parents who have difficulties speaking could intervene with their children's language or grammar problems by placing them in private school, or paying for extra classes to reverse such problems. Lastly, each of these participants had social capital. Social capital is the interactions between a child and parents or teachers. It is highly likely that social capital influenced these individuals as adolescents; however, their problems with English still occur today.

The second-generation participants in this group expressed that they all went to public schools throughout their lives. Three participants have experienced teasing by peers who have spoken grammatically incorrect. Sometimes, they have refrained from participating in class discussions due to these grammatical errors or fear of expressing opinions inarticulately. One participant stated:

There are a lot of thoughts that make sense when thinking it, but when voicing them, sometimes they do not come out correctly. And there are moments when I do not participate in class because I do not want to be judged by peers for how inarticulate I might be.

Similar sentiments were held with the participant, Keith. Keith is a Chinese-American from Queens, New York. His mother and father grew up in Shanghai and Hong Kong, China, respectively. His father who speaks "okay" English graduated from college and began learning English at age 14. His mother, on the other hand, only graduated from a high school in China and has some difficulty speaking English because she taught it herself. Keith described his own problems as well. In middle school, his sentence

structure while writing was problematic. Although, he says he writes better today, he still admits to having some difficulties. Furthermore, when discussing his confidence he stated, “I am less confident in writing paper or socializing with others because as an American, I feel like I should be better at speaking and writing than I am.” Like Keith, Sam had similar experiences.

Sam is a Japanese-American. Both of his parents emigrated from Japan at ages 19 and 21. Both parents only attained only high school degrees. While discussing his parents, his face turned red and looked down to the floor. He appeared embarrassed as he explained their struggle with English proficiency and articulation. His mother frequently has to restart stories to reorganize her thoughts. His father only had difficulties remembering to use correct prepositions and tenses. Sam then described his mistakes and his embarrassment. While spending time with friends and sharing humorous stories, he frequently would ruin the punch-lines of jokes or funny anecdotes with disorganized thoughts. When this occurred, his friends would tease him saying, “You can always count on Sam to ruin the simplest joke or story.” Often times when he is unable to explain a thought, he feels nervous about messing up and then potentially getting teased. Unlike Keith who had human capital, Sam does not have abundant human or financial capital. He went to public school and is attending Fordham University because tuition, room, and board are completely paid for with athletic scholarships. The only capital he did have was

social capital. His parents encouraged him every day to study textbooks and finish homework despite his low-confidence of speaking and writing.

In contrast to Sam and Keith, Travis, a Korean-American from Hawaii, has some difficulties with grammar and has an average range of vocabulary, yet does not have low self-esteem of his oratory or writing skills. Travis is the exception to this group of participants. Born and raised in Hawaii, he believes over 95% of the people he interacts with are Asian, if not Korean. Many of these peers have at least one immigrant parent. Travis did not form any low-confidence issues because the majority of his friends and family speak like him. So for over seventeen years of his life, the style and proficiency of his speech were considered normal or even better than normal compared to some residents of Hawaii. Both of his parents attended high school only. However, his father learned English on his own and speaks as well as an “average person.” His mother, however, speaks very little English, and as a result the communication between Travis and his mother has diminished.

Clearly, a common characteristic within this group of individuals with the exception of Travis is self-esteem. Although feeling embarrassed by speaking inarticulately or by lacking language proficiency does not occur daily, these occurrences have made them felt inadequate to a certain degree that nonetheless affects their self-esteem. However, there is not enough data to determine if most second-generation immigrants who speak incorrectly are affected similarly. Thus, in the cases of these three second-generation immigrants, their parents have not provided them with abundant

human or financial capital. In contrast, each participant in the latter group exhibited high confidences regarding their intellect, speaking capabilities, and their articulation.

High parental achievement, Schooling, and High Self-Esteems

The second group comprised of seventeen individuals drastically differentiates from the former. Sixteen of these participants' parents attended college or graduate school. Out of these parents, all of them were rated that have excellent English. In addition, fifteen out of seventeen students went to private school for grade school through high school. The two students who attended public high schools were a Sudan-American and Nate. In the case with the Sudan-American, he stated that his parents were extremely involved in his education. Researchers have found that interactions between the child and parents have positively affected their educational success as well. This social capital can be observed by most second-generation African immigrants because they have "deep-seated commitments to education and the values of self-improvement [...] where education is viewed as a proven agency for attaining status and mobility" (Arthur, 4). Furthermore, Nate was able to overcome second-generation immigrants' obstacles because of financial capital. As a child, he went to a special program for Spanish/English speaking students that focused on fluency for each language. The programs helped prevent young children from confusing the two languages, as well as repeatedly instilling the separate grammatical rules into the minds of these students. Although he was fluent in Spanish as a child, his lack of practice lost his abilities to communicate fluently.

Despite these two incidences, each of these participants has experienced similar human, financial, and social capital that facilitated the surpassing of typical second-generation immigrants obstacles. Out of all the surveys, 85% of the participants indicated that their parents attended either college or graduate school compared to 26.8% of immigrants in the United States who had a bachelor's degree or higher and 32.2% lacking a high school diploma ("Migration Information Source"). According to the *Business Insider*, Fordham University was rated fourth and fifth on America's most expensive schools which reiterates the demographic of high socioeconomic statuses of second-generation immigrants which, in turn, proliferated high language proficiency.

Every surveyor in this group indicated that they never had any problems articulating their thoughts or using grammar. Some even bragged about how well they spoke. In one survey, a Trinidad-American said, "I think I am quite eloquent in speaking and did relatively well in speech and debate." This confidence is also seen in both interviews with Emma and Gabriela. Emma fluently speaks, reads, and writes in Hebrew and Russian. According to her survey, she answered that her mother has excellent English, while her father English was "good." When I asked why, she stated that:

My dad speaks with an accent and sometimes uses tenses or words incorrectly. Generally though he speaks well. He'll say "Why do I care what he said" instead of "why should I care what he said."

For an average person, replacing "should" with "do" does not qualify for demoting someone's English speaking abilities. This statement reflects a higher standard that accompanies people who have maintained a high standard for education throughout their

lives. Furthermore, this high standard reveals her perception of her language skills, which, in turn exhibits her confidence in her communicating abilities. This level of confidence is not only with their speaking capabilities but in other areas as well.

Gabriela's mother is from Italy and her father is from the United States. Her mother was first taught English at age fifteen, and speaks better than Gabriela's father. Even though Gabriela's father is American, her mother speaks better than him because she is a linguist. As a professor at Marquette University in Wisconsin, she teaches Italian. Like Emma, Gabriela feels that she is very articulate. She believes that she is better at communicating than most because she is able to utilize language in different ways since she is fluent in both English and Italian. Elizabeth Gatlinton and Norman Segalwitz's theory of language believes that fluent bilinguals have more cognitive flux than monolinguals. Gabriela also went to private school. In Gabriela's interview, I observed that she also had high confidence in speaking English well and communicating her thoughts and ideas. When asked, "Does being part of a bilingual family make you more or less confident?" She responded, "It makes me feel more confident because I think it gives me a different and broader perspective, and a better understanding of other cultures." Thus, she believes she has more insight than the average person. According to Wallace E. Lambert, bilinguals have more flexibility in thought, or "auditory reorganization," which, in turn reflected insight and sophistication (16-17).

A Comparison of Self-Esteems of both Participant Groups

Both Emma and Gabriela are fluent bilinguals whose languages were influenced by their parents' educational and occupational achievements, their private school curriculum, and parental involvement. Nate, on the other hand, is a nonfluent bilingual who attended public school and participated in special programs for Spanish/English speakers. These circumstances of human, social, and financial capital facilitated the language acquisition success of these individuals. Their successful language acquisition effected their successes and cognitive flexibilities which contributed to their self-esteem. John E. Joseph states that language is a vehicle of representation. Excellence of expressing one's personality, characteristics, thoughts, and ideas manifests within their self-perception. A view of being extremely intelligent goes hand-in-hand with a positive self-concept and self-esteem. Furthermore, Joseph states:

The self is both the producer and the consumer of its own enacted identities. It is a matter of common experience that people can and spontaneously articulate how they think others have seen them [and] how they think they come off in a particular social situation. This, moreover, is an important part of self-concept. (82)

Keith becomes self-conscious when he has problems with his English proficiency capabilities in both social and educational settings. Since he believes that he is perceived as an American, having difficulties with his native language makes him feel inferior. The Korean-American's self-concept was affected because often times her belief is that she will be judged by her peers if she can not articulate her thoughts. This sentiment suggests that her peers will assume that her articulation and intellect do not meet the standards of

their class's intelligence. However, a low self-esteem is not a characteristic of the majority of second-generation immigrants. Their characteristics include high socioeconomic status, high parental educational and occupational achievement, and attending private schools.

American Identity of Second-Generation Immigrants at Fordham University

The fluency of bilinguals' second-languages, the participation of different cultural experiences, and felicities or difficulties speaking, writing, and reading English do not sufficiently promote the identification of being an American. Second-generation immigrants must consider a number of choices prior to associating themselves to a specific identity. Rubén Rumbaut and Alejandro Portes had named four types of choices for second-generation's self-identification. They must consider their national origin identities, hyphenated identities, assimilated unhyphenated identities, and dissimilative racial and pan-ethnic identities. The majority of the respondents of my surveys contested that they identify solely with American, even if they have repeatedly participated in cultural events and holidays. They associated being an American as adhering to American beliefs and values. Some also listed reasons such as living in America and having American friends for having residing with an American Identity. For instance, Keith identifies as an American even though he spoke fluent Chinese to his parents and his grandmother at home throughout his life. He travels to China frequently and celebrates Chinese holidays such as the Chinese New Year. These activities should make

Keith identify more with being a Chinese-American; however he said he only associates himself as an American. The list of qualities that made him identify as American were the belief in the American dream, born and raised in America, citizen of the United States, displaying patriotism, wanting to improve the United States, representing the United States abroad, and cheering for the United States in international events. His reasons suggest that despite experiencing life that significantly contrasts with Americans who have no ties to other cultures or languages, identifying as an American is choice. In addition, Gabriela identifies herself as an American despite speaking Italian fluently and visiting Italy over thirty times. She places more value in the characteristics such as, being an American Citizen, residing in the United States for most of her life, speaking English more than Italian, attending American schools, celebrating American holidays, understanding the American culture and slang, and her father's family living in the United States for a long time.

However, Emma associates more with being a Russian than an American because her values or beliefs are not purely American. She credits her family to creating her own identity. Throughout childhood, her family exposed her to museums that made her feel more culturally linked to Europe than the United States even though she was born here. Children of immigrants “do not fit neatly into a boxed categories, they are complicating the task of measuring ethnicity, race, and ancestry” (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters, & Holdaway, (68). In several surveys, four participants indicated that they were uncertain if they consider themselves as an American. One participant said due to the fact that she celebrates many Korean and American traditions she cannot specify whether she

identifies with one identity more than the other. Philip Kasinitz, John H. Mollenkope, and Mary C. Waters, have acknowledged these sentiments in second-generation immigrants as “insider” and “outsider” status. They define these statuses as second-generation immigrants balancing their everyday lives of notion of foreign-ness and native-born entitlement (2).

Other researchers further explain this theory with their own study of identity among immigrants and second-generation immigrants. They argue that identities among these individuals are complex and cannot be neatly categorized into stagnant labels (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters, & Holdaway, 67). Identity for them includes fluidity and hybridism in order to reconcile two or more cultures that have continuously been a part of their lives. Moreover, their hybrid identities are created because of their complex and diverse backgrounds. Researchers defined this complexity as going beyond “combining birthplace, origin, and parental birthplace” (75). Thus, the four respondents who were unsure of how to identify themselves may oscillate between an American identity and the identities of their other cultures. Participants of Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters, and Holdaway’s study often “self-consciously label themselves “American,” particularly when contrasting themselves with immigrant family members” (81). This instance could be the underlying reason of why the respondents are uncertain with which identities to choose.

A Reflection of my own Experiences

The inspiration for writing this paper comes from the desire to learn more about myself and my own experiences. I am a second-generation Polish immigrant; my father is an American citizen, and my mother is a Polish immigrant. My mother began speaking English while in Poland, but could not fluently speak English until she immigrated to the United States at age 19. As soon as she arrived, she began working as a nurse's assistant in a Polish community in Massachusetts. Her English developed by conversing in everyday conversation with English speakers, and by watching soap operas. Even though she speaks English fluently, today she has several problems that include using incorrect tenses, word usage, and sometimes even forgetting to use prepositions while speaking and writing. To a certain degree, I, too, have adopted these inaccuracies in speech.

Throughout childhood I knew I had minor difficulties expressing myself in a sophisticated manner, and speaking and writing grammatically correct. Though these problems are not daily occurrences, friends and peers have noticed when I struggle while trying to articulate a story or an idea. Although my father obtained a degree at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and is an electric engineer for General Electric, I was more influenced from my mother's English proficiency. My father often traveled abroad on business trips. Therefore, my father was not able to correct me when I inherently learned mistakes from my mother.

Compared to the surveyors, I believe I can relate more to the group with a lower self-esteem. Although my father had attained high parental educational success, i.e. human capital, I do not have any experience with financial or social capital. From an

early age, it was clear that reading and writing were my weakest skills due to the difficulties I had fully explaining ideas in a grammatically correct and sophisticated manner. Financial capital could have reconciled this difficulty by attending a private school or going to a tutor for additional help. However, none of these instances occurred. The only social capital that I experienced was my parents actively being involved with my education—they, however, were not concerned with my English. They believed my minor difficulties were normal for an average student and thus, did not need any interventions.

It was until after I started attending Fordham University was when I realized my errors were noticeable to my peers. My friends constantly laughed and teased me when I would say “I’m going to go bathroom,” instead of “I am going to go to the bathroom.” Among my friends, I have been known to forget words important to the sentence structures. This error is only one exact example of what my mom commonly says. My friend’s teasing definitely affected my self-esteem for a prolonged period of time. For most of my sophomore year at Fordham I was insecure and confused why I had many more mistakes compared to them. My concern for how I was perceived while speaking consumed me. It immensely affected my participation because I was nervous of how my classmates would judge me. This perpetuating thought convinced me that others would think I was not intelligent because I sometimes could not completely articulate my ideas. Classes that required an understanding and participation for complex ideas gave me anxiety. I was especially nervous for the American Studies classes, where all of the

students were selected based on their grade-point averages and admission essay. I felt inferior while participating compared to those who had eloquence and sophistication while presenting their own ideas and analyses. I have found that my experiences with schooling and language are not relatable to the majority second-generation immigrants who have bypassed obstacles similar to my experiences. Like the minority of second-generation immigrants at Fordham University, in relation to articulation and English proficiency, I, too, 'got it from my mama.'

Challenges and Future Research

The challenges faced while researching were two-fold. First, I had difficulties finding enough participants to take my surveys. Only twenty-one surveys were filled out. There are more than twenty-one second-generation immigrants at Fordham, though I was unable to find all of them. I passed out surveys in class, to cultural clubs, among my swimming and diving team members, and to strangers in the dining hall. My efforts were sufficient, however the number of surveys that were returned were not. Furthermore, the next challenge I had were interpreting the surveys. My fellow peers who did not devote fifteen to twenty minutes answering my survey, answered the questions quickly. Though the consent form allowed skipping any questions that makes the respondent uncomfortable, I believe that many respondents used this as an excuse to fill out the survey quicker. The questions that were mostly left unanswered were "what is your GPA?" and any questions that prompted explanations. For example, quite often a respondent would reply yes to a question like "Do any of your parents have difficulties

with English proficiency, articulation, or grammar?” without giving examples when asked to. This proved difficult during the analysis of the surveys.

Furthermore, some answers made me question the reliability and validity of the participants. For example, most of the respondents said they never had any trouble with grammar or articulation. Some explained that they had exceptionally wide vocabulary or they spoke eloquently. Are these answers a realistic sense of confidence or are they examples of inflated egos? This is problematic because a realistic sense of confidence requires objectivity, while inflated egos are subjective to each individual person.

In the future, I would like to see a study across the United States of second-generation immigrants at private and public schools. This could provide a stark contrast between self-esteem, cultural identities, income, parental achievements, etc. In addition, researchers should examine if schools provide resources to help second-generation immigrants with the English proficiencies and articulation. If the majority of schools do not have these types of programs, school board members should consider its implementation. This study could raise questions about school systems in high schools that would require solutions for educational success and self-esteem.

Conclusion

Elite institutions and capital are essential to the language acquisition and self-esteem of Fordham University’s second-generation immigrants. However, these students are not representative of the population of immigrants. Around 30% do not attain high school degrees compared to 100% of participants in this study whose parents did attain a

high school diploma. This is problematic because power and agency has not reached the majority of immigrants, only those who are already affluent. This makes it difficult for second-generation immigrants who are not as lucky as the three participants with a low self-esteem because many may not have the opportunities to go to a prestigious university. In conclusion, the majority of second-generation immigrants at Fordham University had resources of abundant human, social, and financial capital that led to high self-esteem. In contrast, the second-immigration students who were lacking in these areas generally had lower-self esteems. Despite accomplished or insufficient English proficiency, the identification as an American includes many more characteristics such as ideals and beliefs. If they do identify with one culture, it is a choice that embodies fluidity.

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